THE INTEREST OF THE SPIRIT IN Prayer.

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8° z. 85. Th.

READER,

THe following Discourse was a Sermon preacht some years since, and one that heard it, desiring a Copy of it, I did at length yeeld to his importunity, and sent it him, as now you see it, with the addition of these few Latin Quotations, which I do not use to interrupt the attention of ordinary hearers

with in popular Diſcourſes; and this I did, not purpoſing to make it thus publick, but having once tranſcribed it, I conſented further to the deſire of ſome to have it printed, but never had opportunity to review what I had written from the firſt time that I ſent it till I ſaw it from the Preſs. This I thought meet to advertiſe you of, that you may not expect much accurateneſs (though you knew not the Authour before) nor a clear and full diſcuſſion of ſuch things, as a diſcourſe of this nature

ture would allow, only some brief touches of it. I hope none will complain of a bold pressing of Scripture to serve an Hypothesis, *of propension to any party, of a slavish subjection to the Authority of great Names, of a Sceptical or Magisterial censuring of other Men of their Opinions; I have endeavoured to shew that candour, freedom, impartiality, moderation, that I may not be afraid of, or ashamed to own it as a Man, a Scholar, a Christian, a Minister, either when it is exposed to the*

censure of others, or at that day when every mans work shall be made manifest. I have, for the finding out of the truth herein, attended to two things, Scripture *and* Experience; *both of which we should have a due regard to in our search after Truth. As in Physick, through practice and Experience be a great advantage to Men, and make things more clear, as Examples do Rules: yet if Men trust wholly thereto, the* Emperical *Physician may be deceived assoon as the* Rational *or* Me-

Methodical: *because there being so many things that effects depend upon, or may proceed from, it is very easie to mistake that for the cause of a thing, which is not the cause of it; and though they see the effects, they know not what concurs thereto, or what hath the chief influx into them: and I have oft observed and lemented Mens being imposed upon by this fallacy of* non causa pro causa, *or taking that for the cause of a thiug which is not, especially in matters of Religion. Besides, Men*

are

are apt to infer general conclusions from particular experiments, and so either measure themselves by others, or make their own experience a standard for the tryal of others. So on the other hand, many times Men attain not the true sense of Scripture, while thay consider things only in the Idea *or notion, without examining how things are really in particular Subjects. I know we must not make Man the measure of all things as* Protagoras *in another sense. Men must be tryed by Scripture,*

ture, not the Scripture by Men. Yet we must acknowledge the Scripture speaks sometimes according to what really is: or, it speaks as things are sometimes *found to be, not according to what is constantly or universally true. Wherefore I have endeavoured to find out what the Scripture, according to its ordinary stile and manner of speaking may intend in such places as I have had occasion to inquire into: and have likewise observed and examined what is the ordinary experience of sober*

ber ſerious Chriſtians, who dare not boaſt of ſuch things as they have not really found in themſelves, but have that experience of God's Gracious working in them which they would not want for the whole world; and which doth eſtabliſh them more firmly in the belief of Spiritual things than to be ſhaken by ſuch ὠτοῤῥέπελοι, *or vain-ſpirited perſons, as are not likely to be acquainted with ſuch matters, or to be competent Judges of them.* There are ſome Erratas *in the Printing, for*

for those who are in the few words of Hebrew, Greek *and* Latin, *as the Learned only can take notice of them, so they know how to correct them. There are some small faults in pointing, and omissions of a letter in some places which any ordinary Reader may know how to rectifie.*

The more considerable you may correct thus:

ERRA-

ERRATA.

Pag. 35. l. 13, r. *as he knows.* P. 39 l. 3. r. *riches of his Mercy.* P. 48. l. 19 r. *desultorians.* P. 55. marg. r. *Gen.* 45. 26. P. 59. l. 17. r. *do confidently.* P. 61. l. 4. r. *the Philosopher speaks.* P. 73. l. 17. r. *ingenuously.* P. 75. l. 4. r. *desired.* P. 83 l. 12. r. *to assist.* P. 100. l. 6 r. *in Prayer.*

The

The Intereſt of the Spirit in Prayer.

Rom. 8. 26.

Likewiſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our Infirmities: For we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it ſelf maketh Interceſſion for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered.

THere are two Things which are the chief Trouble of *Chriſtians* in this world; *inward Corruptions*, or

the Remainders of Sin; and *outward Afflictions, or Tribulations*. Againſt both theſe doth the Apoſtle comfort and encourage them in this Chapter, and in theſe words eſpecially, wherein he ſhews how the holy-Ghoſt, whom our bleſſed Saviour had promiſed as a Comforter to his People, doth perform this Office, particularly, by aſſiſting us in our Prayers.

For the better underſtanding of the Words, we may obſerve, that by *Infirmities*, in Scripture,

ture, are understood either Afflictions, which we call *natural Infirmities*, or sinful Defects, or Imperfections, which we call *Moral* or *Spiritual Infirmities*. It is likely the Apostle understands the former, where he saith, he *takes Pleasure in Infirmities*. 2 Cor. 12. 10. It can hardly be conceived how he should take pleasure in moral Infirmities, and without question he understands outward Afflictions, where he saith *Christ was compassed about with Infirmities*, Heb. 5. 2. for he was

free from all sinful Defects; *He did no sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.* Now if the Apostle should here speak of these natural Infirmities, it is certain the Spirit helps us against them, by assisting us in our Prayers; Prayer being an excellent Remedy against afflictions. Wherefore *David*, when he was in a great Strait, resolves to give himself to Prayer: Which Words have much exercised Criticks. But I think our English Translation hath

1 Pet. 2. 22.

Psal. 109. 4.

hath fully expreſſed the Senſe of them; and Prayer is a Remedy againſt Affliction.

1. As thereby we eaſe our Minds by pouring out our Hearts to God. So the Pſalmiſt expreſſes the Nature of Prayer. It is an Eaſe to us in Trouble to pour out our Complaints into the Boſom of a Friend, and we refreſh our ſelves by giving vent to our paſſion, if it be a Friend that will conſider our Condition, and pity us in it: ſo by Prayer we open our Cauſe to God,

Pſal. 62. 8.

Job. 31. 20.

Jer. 11 20. Lam. 3. 20. 12. or reveal our Cauſe to him; as *Jeremiah* expreſſes it: *He is afflicted in all our Afflictions, and pities us therein, as a Father pities his Children.*

Iſa. 63. 9. Pſal. 103. 13.

2. Prayer is a Remedy againſt Afflictions, as thereby we obtain ſupport and Comfort under them, or Deliverance from them. And I may ſay as much of Prayer, as the Apoſtle doth of Faith, *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man avails much*: It turned the Heart of *Eſau*; it put

Pſal. 138. 3. Pſal. 50. 15. Heb. 11. 3. &c. Jam. 5. 16. Gen. 32. 11.

to

to Flight the *Amalekites*; It held God's Hand; It turned away his wrath; It stay'd the Sun in the Firmament; It opened Heaven, and shut it again; Yea time would fail me to tell of *David*, *Asa*, *Jehoshaphat*, *Hezekiah*, *Esther*; The Prayer made by the Church for *Peter*, which open'd the Prison-doors; The *thundering Legion* in the Time of *Aurelius*, which were so prevalent for the Emperour against his Enemies, when he was in a great Strait, that he

Ex. 17. 11. *Numb* 14. 17. *Exod.* 23. 11. *Joshua* 10. 12. 13. *Jam.* 5 17. 18.

thereupon wrote to the Senate to forbear the Persecution of them, of which, amongst others, we may read *Tertullians Apology, Cap.* 5. and *Eusebius, Lib.* 5. *Cap.* 5. And the Reason of this Efficacy of Prayer is, because they are his Children that pray to him, their Prayers are indited by the Holy-Ghost, and presented by Jesus Christ.

3. Though God do not alwayes answer the Desires of his People in Prayer, yet he many Times quiets their

Hearts so as they go away satisfied, as one that hath left the Management of his Affairs in the hands of a Friend, who he knows is both faithful and able to look after them: As *Hannah* when she had poured forth her Soul before the Lord, went away, and her Countenance was no more sad. And we find that often verified which *Bernard* saith of himself, *Serm.* 32. In *Cant.* *Quoties me Oratio quem pene desperantem suscepit reddidit exultantem et de Venia presumentem?* he went to

1 *Sam.* 1. 15. 18.

Prayer oftentimes even deſpairing, and returned rejoycing and confident of Pardon. Thus we ſhall find *David* beginning his *Pſalms* many times, with mournful complaints, which he ends with Thankſgiving and Triumph; as particularly *Pſal.* 6. *Pſal.* 13. *Pſal.* 22. *Pſal.* 28. *Pſal.* 69. *Pſal.* 142.

But Secondly; hereby ſometimes are meant *moral* or *Spiritual* Infirmities; as the Pſalmiſt accounts it his Infirmity when he was ready to give up his Hopes; and to com-

Pſal. 77. 10.

plain

plain of God as if he had *forgot to be gracious*. And theſe are the Infirmities which the Apoſtle requires *the ſtrong to bear with in the weak*. Rom. 15. 1. Now here it ſeems to ſignifie thoſe ſpiritual Infirmities which we are ſubject to in our *prayers*, by what followes in the Text, and I ſhall make it more fully appear in mine enſuing diſcourſe. It is ſaid *he makes Interceſſion for us*. Which is not to be underſtood as if he did mediate or intercede for us, as Chriſt doth, who doth alſo make Interceſſion for Rom 8. 34.

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us. Neither doth he intercede in us, using us only as Instruments to express his Mind, as evil Spirits speak by those who are possessed by them; but what he doth is by way of Assistance, *lifting over against us*, as the Greek word is by many interpreted, as he that lifts over against another to help him, when he is lifting at something that is too heavy for him: And he is said to *intercede*, because he helps us therein, or causeth us to intercede: As in

in one Place it is said the *Spirit of Adoption* cryeth *Abba Father*; in another Place that *We* thereby cry, *Abba, Father*. As Solomon is said to build the Temple at *Jerusalem*, because he directed, encouraged, and furnished Materials for the Building of it. Both Christ, and the Holy-Ghost are concerned in our Prayers. It is by *Jesus Christ through one Spirit that we have Access to the Father*. And the same Word translated *Advocate*, when applyed to Je-

Gal. 4. 6. Rom. 8. 15. 1 *King.* 8. 13. Ephes. 2. 18. 1 Jo. 2. 1. Jo. 14. 16. 26.

Jesus Christ, is likeways frequently applyed to the Holy Ghost. And as Advocates do not only plead for their Clients, but many times dictate to them what they should say; So both Christ and the Spirit are as Advocates to us. And as *Nathan* did first suggest to *Bathsheba* what she should say, and then came in himself to confirm her Words, to second them, further to urge them: So the Spirit doth first assist us in drawing up our Petitions, for which Cause we

1 King 1. 11. &c.

we are said to pray in or by the Spirit or Holy Ghoſt. And in this reſpect, as is generally ſuppoſed, he is called *the Spirit of Supplication*, And when we have preſented our Petitions, then Chriſt doth by his Interceſſion further confirm them, and plead with the Father on our Behalf. Now I ſhall ſhew particularly what are thoſe Infirmities which we are ſubject to in Prayer, and how the Spirit helps them: And the firſt Infirmity I ſhall ſpeak of, is that which the

Epheſ. 6. 18. *Jude* 20. Zech. 12. 10.

the Apostle here mentions in the Text, that is, *Ignorance*; *we know not what we should pray for as we ought*. He saith not ὅτι οὐκ οἴδαμεν προσεύξασθαι, which might be understood of an Inability in General, as that *they know not to do right*, which is according to the ordinary manner of Expression in several Languages, particularly the *French*, and *Italian*; and our *English* Bibles do well express that of the Evangelist, which hath puzled many Criticks, make it

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as ſure as ye can: But it is here, τι προσευξώμεθα, *we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought.* And this may be underſtood two wayes, either of the Matter of our Prayers, that we know not, as we ſhould indeed know, what to pray for: or of the manner of them, we know not what to pray for as we ſhould pray. It is certainly true of both; As will appear by what I have here to ſay. Matt. 27. 65.

Firſt; we know not what we ſhould pray for: we know not firſt what

what we ſtand in need of; ſuch is the Latitude of the Commands of God, and conſequently the extent of our Duty, that although we may know how to expreſs our Deſires in ſome Comprehenſive Petitions, which according to a large Interpretation of them may reach to our ſeveral neceſſities; Yet we cannot pray explicitely for thoſe ſeveral Mercies which we need. And again, ſo various are the Occurrences of our Lives, that we know not

Pſal. 119. 96.

not what particular temporal Bleſſings to pray for. As God cauſed a Gourd to grow up for *Jonah*, which he laboured not for: So, he prevents us with many Favours, which we cannot by our foreſight or forecaſt contribute any thing to. Now as it is in Learning, thoſe who have ſome Inſight into it, may poſſibly, if they have Opportunity to furniſh themſelves with Books, provide ſuch as may ſerve to inform them in ſome general and common Learning;

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But such is the vast compass of Learning, as that a young Scholar would not know how to furnish a Library, so as to have Books of all sorts to serve himself of upon all Occasions. Or, as in the Accommodations of Life, an ordinary Person may easily know how to furnish himself with necessaries, or what may serve him to live in a mean or sordid Manner: But there are many more things required to live neatly and handsomly, if a man be exact and cu-

curious, which an ordinary Man would not think of. Now thus it is in Matters of *Christianity*, if a man can satisfy himself to live *at all Adventures with God* (as the Expression is in the margent of our Bibles) a little will serve his turne; But if a Man will walk *circumspectly*, or accuratly as a Christian ought to walk, taking heed to his Ways, pondering the Paths of his Feet, taking heed to his Spirit, keeping his Mouth as with a Bridle, filling up every

Lev. 26. 21.

Ephes. 5. 15.

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Relation with the Duties belonging thereto, filling up every Duty with the Graces required therein, exercising the Graces requisite to every Condition; loving Enemies, praying for those that persecute him and despitefully use him, denying himself, crucifying the flesh with the Affections and Lusts, watching against Temptations, there is much required to such Manner of Life, and we shall have many particular Mercies to beg of God in Order thereto.

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Secondly; We know not what is meet and convenient for us to ask; and so sometimes, as the Sons of *Zebedee*, ask we know not what. No man knows what is good for him in this Life. And so we pray many Times for that which would be a Cross or a Curse to us, rather than a Comfort or Blessing. What we pray for as Bread, would, if God should grant it, prove as a Stone to us, rather break our teeth then refresh or nourish us. Probably our Saviour

Matt. 20. 22.

Eccles. 6. 12.

Matt. 7. 9

viour might in these Words refer to some proverbial Speeches among the Jews: For there were Proverbs of like Import, or to the same Purpose, in other Nations, as the *Learned* know: As in these things there was a near Resemblance or Similitude, as to outward Shew: But the greatest Difference as to their use and effect; So as a Child seeing some kind of Stone, as a Pumice-stone or some such like, might desire it, as Bread, to satisfie his Hunger; yet

yet his Father, knowing what it is, would not give it him, as knowing how unfit it would be to anſwer the Childs End. And the like may be ſaid of ſome Eiſhes, and Serpents; Yea of an Egge, and a Scorpion, if that be true which Naturaliſts report of them. The drift of our Saviours Diſcourſe is, that though Children are ſo ignorant as to deſire many things as good for them, which their Parents ſee not good to grant, as knowing them to be improper means

for the attainment of that end which the Children aim at, or propound to themſelves; So we do many times in our Prayers fix on ſuch things as God ſees would not reach the end which we think to attain thereby: So that God does ſometimes deny us in mercy, as well as anſwer us in mercy: For Riches, Honour, Wiſdom, Learning, Beauty, Wives, Children are great Bleſſings, where God is pleaſed to make them ſo; But if we peremtorily and abſolutely inſiſt upon

on them in our Prayers, as *Abraham* for a Child, as if all that God could do for him were nothing, if he went childless; God can give us them alone without that comfort which we expect with them, and so we receive them, as he did a Ring (which he had lost) with great Joy rewarding him that brought it, without taking much notice of it; but upon further Observation, saw, that there was his Ring without the Diamond, so that it was not worth the re- *Gen.* 15. 2.

ward which he gave for finding of it: Outward good things, without that Bleſſing which ſhould make them comforts to us, are not worth asking. Now the Spirit helps this Infirmity by giving us more Wiſdom and ſpiritual Underſtanding. And here I ſhall do theſe two Things.

Firſt, ſhew you that this Wiſdom and Underſtanding is from the the Spirit of God.

Secondly, ſhew you how much this conduces to help us in our

Prayers

Prayers. For the former it is evident from the Teſtimony of the Scripture. The Apoſtle praies for the Epheſians, *that God would give them the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him.* Eph. 1. 17 For the Philippians, *that their Love might abound more and more in Knowledge, and in all Judgment.* Phil. 1. 9 For the Coloſſians, *that they might be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will in all Wiſdom and ſpiritual Underſtanding.* Col. 1. 9. All which doth imply that it is God

that giveth theſe; and that he doth it by his Spirit, is without queſtion, it being thereby that we know the things freely given to us of God. It is he that takes of the things of Chriſt and ſhews them unto us, and ſo is a Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding, making Chriſtians in their Meaſure quick of Underſtanding in the Fear of the Lord. Now if we could not conceive of the manner of this Worke of the Spirit, yet we ſhould reſt in this Evi-

1 Cor. 2. 12.

Joh. 16. 14.

Iſa. 11. 2. 3.

dence,

dence, that there is such an effect of it: And we may further suppose that he gives us an experimental Knowledge of Christian Graces or Vertues, by Working them in us, that he brings the Heart unto Wisdom, or causes us to apply our Hearts thereto, by awakening us to a serious sense of the great importance of heavenly things; and that he doth open our eyes, or elevate our Understandings to understand the marvellous things of God's Law, and so is as eye-

Psal. 119. 18.

Rev. 3. 18.

ſalve to anoint our Eyes, that we may ſee. And if any ſhall yet expect a more ſatisfactory account of this work of the Spirit, let them conſider how little it is that
Eph. 5.13. we underſtand of the nature of Light, though it be that which makes all other Things manifeſt; And though we all by experience know the Benefit thereof, and ſerve our ſelves of it.

Now in the next place I ſhall ſhew how this helps our Ignorance in Prayer: and, firſt, we hereby come to underſtand

ſtand more of the Compaſs and Latitude of our Chriſtian Calling, and how far our Duty extends. Wherefore the Apoſtle, in the forementioned places, prayeth for this *Knowledge, Judgment, Wiſdom, and ſpiritual Underſtanding, that they might be filled with the fruits of Righteouſneſs; and that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good Work.* Hence it is that ſerious Chriſtians are ſo inlarged many times in their Prayers. Some men go to Markets or Fairs

Phil 1. 1.

Col. 1. 10.

only for company or out of Curiosity, to see and be seen, and such are soon weary of being there, and may come home as soon as they please; But those that are men of much Business, and great Dealing, have many Occasions to take up their time, which cause them many times to stay late. Formal Christians have little to do with God when they come to him only for Company, or Custom; but a serious Christian, that understands the Business of Christianity, hath so much

much to do when he comes to the Throne of Grace, and the Favour of God, to desire towards him in so many particular Cases, and on so many Occasions, that he hardly knows how to get away; He hath such Duties to perform, which he wants Help in, to perform them as he knows he ought; such Graces to be strengthened, which are ready to dye; such difficulties to be directed in, such Temptations to be strengthened against.

Secondly; by this Wisdom and Under-

standing,

ſtanding, we come to approve the things that
Phil. 1. 10. are more excellent, to value things according to their real worth, and ſo not to inſiſt too peremptorily on temporal Mercies; As Chriſt ſubmitted his natural Deſires to the Will and Deſigne of his Father.
Matt. 26. 39. So that we do not too much urge Petitions for outward Bleſſings, but
Jo. 12. 27. (as *David*) look upon it as an Anſwer to our Prayers in Trouble or Affliction, if God ſtrengthen us with ſtrength in our Souls, and account

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a ſanctifyed uſe of Af- *Pſal.* 138.
fliction, ſo, as thereby 3.
to be made Partakers *Heb.*12.
of God's Holineſs, as 11.
better than Deliverance
from it. It is true
theſe acts of the Spirit
upon the Soul, do but
habitually qualifie it
for Prayer; and many
ſuppoſe there is yet a
further actual Aſſiſtance
of the Spirit in Prayer
whereby he doth ſug-
geſt our very Words to
us. Now to look a *1 Cor.*2.
little more narrowly in- 13.
to this matter, we may
obſerve, that God, who
worketh all things ac-
cording

Eph. 1.11. cording to the Counsel of his own will, is pleased to work variously, as the nature of things doth require, or as may best serve his own wise and holy Ends. Our Salvation depends chiefly upon his effectual heart-turning Grace; But yet he makes his Providence many times subservient to this Grace: For we see he doth hereby usually cast men under such means, and into such Circumstances, as may best serve his Grace: though when he would make

manifest

manifeſt the power of his Grace, and the rights of his Mercy, he will turn a man in his ful Career to Hell, as he did *Paul.* So he uſually makes Nature and other Means ſubſervient to his Power, and to the operations of his Spirit: Yet when he would give clearer Proof of his divine Power, and when ſuch ſubſervient means fail, he ſhews that he hath no need of them. Of old he fed his people with Bread from Heaven, while they were in a

Wilder-

Wilderneſs, and could not be ſupplied with Bread in an ordinary Way: But when they came into the Land of *Canaan*, and had Opportunity to eat of the Corn thereof, the Manna ceaſed. So, when God gave a new Law by *Moſes*; for gaining the greater Credit thereto, he indued him with extraordinary Gifts, and inſpired him immediately by his Spirit; And ſo he did other Prophets, when he would recover his Church from ſome notorious Defection;

Joſh. 5.12.

ction: But ordinarily, we know, he ſerved himſelf of ſuch as had an Education, which fitted them for that work, which he imploied them them in; as will appeare to any that ſhall conſider that there were places of Education, which were called *Schools of the Prophets*: For it is evident from Scripture that there were certain Companies of them which did abide together in ſome conſiderable Number, becauſe they were forced to go and build them

2 Kings 2. 3. *Cap.* 4. 38. *Cap.* 6. 1, &c.

Matt. 23. 9.

1 Sam. 10. 11. *Cap.* 19. 24.

another Place: and they were called *Sons of the Prophets*, becauſe they were inſtructed by ſome famous or eminent perſon whom they called *Father*: For there were Fathers by Inſtruction as well as by Generation. It is further evident that it was lookt upon as an unuſual thing for the Spirit of God to come upon any but ſuch as were thus trained up; becauſe it was lookt upon as ſuch a ſtrange thing that *Saul* ſhould propheſie; and by the Apology of

of *Amos*, and the Confession of the false Prophet. Now to bring this nearer to our Purpose: At the first preaching of the Gospel God was pleased to confirm it by signs and Wonders, and diverse Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, for the gaining of more Credit thereto. And then there were Persons to be sent forth into several Nations of the World, which could not speak their Languages, nor were instructed in many things which might

Amos 7. 11. Zech. 13. 5.

Heb. 2. 4.

might be uſeful to them in ſuch an Imployment; So God did ſupply that Defect by the extraordinary work of his own Spirit: But when the Goſpel was confirmed by theſe Gifts and Miracles, and was planted in the ſeveral Nations of the World, It hath pleaſed the Lord to make uſe of ordinary Means as he did of Old, to be ſubſervient to his Spirit in ſuch Miniſtrations as are for the Good of his Church; ſo that there is not ſuch a diſtinct evi-

evident Assistance of the Spirit now in preaching and praying, as was in the Primitive Church: Yet we may observe whom it hath pleased God to make use of, for the work of the Ministry, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Christ. 1 Cor. 14. 15. Eph. 4. 12.

If any shall to what I have said, object, *That of old when any were acted by the Spirit of God (though there were Societies of Prophets) it came evidently upon them and there was such a divine*

vine Power upon them, as it did plainly appear they were not acted by their own Spirit, but by the Spirit of God.

I answer; the Spirit of God did then act them according to that dispensation which they were then under, and agreeable to his manner of working upon the Prophets of old. And we may observe a manifest Difference betwixt the Work of the Spirit upon the Prophets under the Old Testament, and such as were extraordinarily gif-

gifted under the New: Thoſe had the Spirit coming upon them onely at certain times; as it is frequently ſaid, the Word of the Lord came to them at ſuch a time, or at ſuch a time they had ſuch a thing revealed to them; and it came upon them in ſuch a manner, that they were as men in a Rapture or extacy out of themſelves, ſo that they uſed ſtrange Geſtures ſometimes; and in their ſtile they ſpeak not after the manner of men, but paſs from one

2 *Kings* 4. 27.

1 *Sam.* 19. 24.

one thing to another, not obſerving any Method or Connexion of things of the ſame Nature or Argument. But under the New Teſtament they had a more conſtant habitual Aſſiſtance of the Spirit, whereby they were moved more agreably to their Natures, in a more ſober rational way; So that their ſtile is more even, compoſ'd, and one thing depending more methodically upon another; and they are not ſo diſultorious as the Prophets, making

ing frequent and ſudden Tranſitions from one Subject to another, of a quite different Nature; and agreable hereto is the ordinary Aſſiſtance which we now have from the Spirit of God, which being in ſuch a calme connatural Way or Manner, is not ſo eaſily obſerved as the Tranſports, or more violent Motions of Prophets and prophetical men of Old.

And as in Preaching, when men have, by giving attendance to Read- 1 *Tim.* 4.

 13.

ing & Study, both got a ſtock of habitual Knowledge, and made actual Preparation for delivering a Sermon, it pleaſes God ſometimes to ſuggeſt things to them that may ſerve his own wiſe and holy End, which they never thought of in their Preparation; as in the caſe of *Auſtin*, who converted *Firmas* a Manichee, by ſomething which he did, beſides his Intention, fall upon in his preaching. And the experience of many can witneſs

ness that they have had many things brought to mind in Preaching which they had never prepared. So in Prayer; though the Spirit of God do not ordinarily assist either Ministers or private Christians, so as he did those that had the Gift of Prayer in the primitive Church; but they do ordinarily consider what Errand they are going to God on beforehand; yet, as is said in another Case, there is many times *given them in that hour what they* Mat. 10. 19.

ſhould ſpeak; And divers things ſuggeſted to them by the Spirit of God, who doth doubtleſs put into them many Good things; as the evil Spirit ſteals away Good things from us. And though I would not impute the difference that is in the Prayers of Chriſtians alwayes to the unequal Aſſiſtance of the Spirit; yet, on the other Hand, we ſhould not impute it wholly to the uneven working of mens Fancies, or the different motion of the natural Spirits. An-

Another Infirmity which we are ſubject to in our praiers, is, *Unbelief*. That this is a ſinful Infirmity, is evident from the diſpleaſure of God againſt the Noble-man that would not believe the plenty that ſhould be in *Samaria*; and againſt the good man *Zacharia*, that did not believe the things promiſed, which were to be fulfilled in their ſeaſon. And we are ſubject to this Infirmity in three caſes eſpecially: Firſt, when we are under great and clear convictions of Sin;

2 *King.* 7. 19.

Luke. 1. 20.

when we have our ſin ſet in order before us, and repreſented by the Spirit of God in all the Circumſtances which may aggravate it. For, firſt, the pardon of it ſeems to be no light matter, but an act of Divine Power. As *Moſes* praies that the Power of the Lord may be great therein. I know it may be interpreted of his power in bringing them into the Land of *Canaan*, upon the pardon of their ſin: But yet it is an act of Divine power to pardon ſin, in that God

Num. 14. 17.

God doth ſo far prevail with himſelf therein, we ſhould not be able to overcome our own paſſion, ſo far as to pardon ſuch as had ſo far offended us, and were ſo much in our power. But further; thoſe who are under ſuch convictions have ſuch an eſteem of Gods pardoning grace, that they are afraid to believe it, or pleaſe themſelves with the hopes of it, leſt their hopes ſhould fail them, and ſuch a diſappointment aggravate their trouble. Thus *Jacob* was Gen. 47. 26.

was backward to believe the advancement of his Son *Joseph*, looking upon it as too good news to be true. So when Christ was risen, they believed not for joy. *Quod nimis volumus haud facile credimus & tarda solet magnis rebus inesse fides.* Whereas unhumbled sinners that were never made sensible of the evil of sin, are so ready to believe the pardon of it, that they can hardly believe that God will punish it, but think it would be rigour and severity in him so to do.

Luk. 24. 41.

A

A ſecond caſe, is, when we are in great ſtraits and difficulties; as the Iſraelites, *Can God furniſh a table in the Wilderneſs? Can theſe dry bones live?* Our hope is loſt, we are cut off for our part. It is made an argument of ſtrong faith in *Abraham*, to believe in hope againſt hope.

Pſal. 78 19.
Ezek. 37 11.
Rom. 4. 18, 19.

A third caſe, is, when the anſwer of our prayers is deferred or denyed. Sometimes God ſeems to be angry againſt the prayers of his people; and when they pray, things go worſe

Pſal. 80. 4.

and worse. And it was an argument of strong faith in the woman of *Canaan*, that she did not cast away her confidence when first Christ seemed not to regaad her prayers: He answered her not a word, and when he did answer, did in effect deny her, telling them that *He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*; and when she persisted in her suit, upbraids her as one unfit for mercy; *this would be to take the childrens bread and cast it unto dogs*. It is hard to hold on, when

Ma. 15. 22. &c.

God

God thus beats us off.
Now the Spirit helps
this Infirmity, *First*, by
ſtrengthening the habit Heb. 12. 2.
of Faith in us. Jeſus in-
deed is the Author and Ioh. 16. 14.
Finiſher of our Faith;
yet it is by the Spirit
that he doth it, the work Phil. 1. 19.
of Faith is fulfilled as
well as begun with pow- Theſ. 1. 11.
er, He doth ſo fully con-
vince us of the infinite
Wiſdom, Power, Good-
neſs and Truth or Ve-
racity of God, that we Eph. 1. 19.
do not confidently re-
ly upon his Promiſes,
or Attributes, ſo far as Pſal. 62.
the Scripture gives us
en-

encouragement to do it. *Secondly*, he doth this by witnessing to us our Adoption, so as we can come to God with a filial boldness, crying to him, *Abba, Father*. Many suppose this testimony of the Spirit to be an internal immediate evidence of the Spirit of God to the Soul of a Believer, saying (as *David* prayes) *I am thy Salvation*; or, as Christ to him that was sick of the Palsy, *thy sins are forgiven thee*. Now to affirm there is no such testimony of the Spi-

Rom 8.15. 16.

Psal. 35.3.

Matt. 9 2.

Spirit, becauſe we find no ſuch thing in our ſelves, is as the Philoſophers ſpeak, to meaſure vertue by our ſelves, and to think nothing can be done which we cannot do our ſelves. *Seneca Epiſt.* 71. And for what is objected againſt this, from the countenance that it gives to *Enthuſiaſmes*, and pretences to ſecret inſpiration, and the tendency that it hath to make men deceive themſelves by Satanical ſuggeſtions and deluſions. It is anſwered, that though this

Te-

Teſtimony be not mediately by the Word, it is always according to the Word: ſo that men do in vain pretend to ſuch a Teſtimony, while they have not theſe characters of the Children of God; which the Scripture makes an Evidence of Adoption; and that the Spirit doth witneſs ſo plainly and clearly, as to ſet a man above all ſuſpition of Deluſion; as it did the Apoſtles and Prophets, when they were inſpired thereby. Though it is not denied that men

may

may verily think that the illusions of Satan are the Testimony of the Spirit; as he that is awake may certainly know that he is so, though he that dreams may verily believe he is awake. Yet to affirm that this is the Testimony of the Spirit, which Believers may ordinarily expect, would rather create Scruples in the minds of many, who not daring to speak by guess, or hear-say, or boast of what Christ hath not wrought in them, cannot say that they

they ever had any such Teſtimony. Neither will theſe places of Scripture which are alledged in this caſe prove any ſuch thing: for not only things are ſaid to witneſs in Scripture, which can do it only objectively; as the heap of ſtones caſt up by *Jacob*; *Job's* Wrinkles and Leanneſs, our ſins: But perſons, according to Scripture, do witneſs objectively by their actions, in reſpect of which thoſe mentioned by the Apoſtle, Heb. 11. are called *Witneſſes*. And

Gen. 31. 48.
Job. 16. 8.
Iſai. 59. 12.
Heb. 12. 1.

if

if it be further urged that the Apoſtle ſaith, *the Spirit himſelf witneſſeth, not his Graces.* I anſwer; God himſelf is ſaid to witneſs, when he doth it only by the Effects or Operations of the Holy Ghoſt. So that the Spirit himſelf may be ſaid to witneſs to our Spirits, or with our Spirits, when he acts us and leads us. Yet I will not deny that the Spirit doth more towards aſſuring us of our adoption, as a Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation, in the knowledge

Acts 5.32.

Heb. 2.4.

Eph. 1.17.

knowledg of Christ. He may assist or enlighten our *understandings*, both to discern those Characters of Divinity which are in the Scripture, evidencing the Authority of it, and likewise to know the things that are freely given to us of God; or to discern or make a right Judgment of the Work of Grace in our own Souls, some way answering to the gift of discerning of Spirits in the Primitive Church: And this is one effect of the Spirit, to enlighten our Un-

1 Cor. 2. 12.

1 Cor. 12. 10.

Understandings, to know the exceeding greatness of his Power towards those that believe. But what ever we determine concerning the manner, yet for the thing it self the Scripture plainly affirms that the Spirit witnesses that we are the Children of God. *Eph.* 1.18

Thirdly: the Spirit helps our Unbelief, by bringing things to our Remembrance. Forgetfulness is many times a cause of Unbelief; and the Remembrance of what God hath *Mat.* 16. 9. *Deut.* 7.17.

done

done both for our ſelves
Pſal.77.11 and others, a great ſupport to our Faith. Now Chriſt promiſed that the Spirit ſhould
Pſ.78.35. bring to Remembrance whatſoever he had ſaid
Joh.14.26 to his Diſciples. I know this might be verified in his effecting or accompliſhing what Chriſt had foretold: As when the Diſciples ſaw
John 2.17 the Zeal of Chriſt in purging the Temple, it put them in Mind of that which was written in the Pſalms, *the Zeal of thine Houſe hath eaten me up.* But yet this may have

have a further meaning: and, as he doth assist our other faculties, so he may the memory also; not only by habitual Grace, disposing our hearts to the love of heavenly things, which makes us more frequently think of them; but by suggesting things to us, as occasion requires, which is not improbable. If we consider that the Divil steals things out of our hearts, whereby we become forgetful hearers, and not doers of the Word; so that the holy Spirit, to counterwork

Psal. 119. 97.

Luk. 8. 12.

ter-work him, doth often keep things in the Imagination of the thoughts of our Hearts, and bring back what the Devil hath ſtollen away. And further, we know by experience that it hath been with many Chriſtians, as with *Hagar* that ſate and wept as if there was no way but her Son muſt periſh for want of water, till God opened her Eyes to ſee a well of Water: So many have refuſed to be comforted, forgetting the exhortation or con-

1 *Chron.* 29. 18.

Gen. 21. 16. 19.

ſo-

ſolation which ſpeaketh *Heb.* 12. 5.
to them as to Children,
till ſome Promiſe or o-
ther paſſage of Scripture
hath been ſuggeſted to
them; from which, as
from Wells of Salvation, *Iſa.* 12. 3.
they have drawn Wa-
ter with Joy and Com-
fort.

I might add, that
the Spirit of God may
make ſome extraordi-
nary Impreſſion of con-
fidence upon the Hearts
of Chriſtians in their
Praiers for ſome tem-
poral Mercies; as in
Luther, when he pray-
ed for his Friend *Myco-*
nius

nius; and *Edward* the ſixth, when he prayed for his Tutor Sir *John Cheek*. But theſe are extraordinary caſes; neither is want of Faith herein an Infirmity: That Faith of Miracles, which ſome had in Prayer in Chriſt's time, and the times of the Apoſtles, not being now repuired of us.

Matt. 21. 22.

Mark 11. 24.

James 5. 15.

Another Infirmity which we are liable to in our Praiers, is, *Hypocriſie*; when we flatter God with our mouth, and lye to him with our Tongue. And this happens

Pſal. 78. 36.

happens in two cases, first, when we pray according as we are convinced in our consciences we ought to pray; or, as we have been taught by Forms, or otherwise, to pray: and so the matter of our prayers is such as it ought to be; but we cannot bring our hearts freely to consent thereto, or our corrupt lusts put in exceptions, and plead for an indulgence; as *Austin* Ingeniously confesses of himself: *At ego adolescens miser valde, miser in exordio ipsius ado-* Confess. l. 8. c. 7.

leſcentiæ; etiam petieram a te caſtitatem, & dixeram: da mihi Caſtitatem & Continentiam, ſed noli modo. Timebam enim ne me cito exaudires, & cito ſanares a Morbo Concupiſcentiæ, quam malebam expleri quàm extingui: That is, I a wretched young man, unhappy in the very beginning of my youth, had even then deſired Chaſtity of thee, and ſaid, give me Chaſtity and Continency: But do not give it me yet, for I was afraid leſt thou ſhouldſt hear me

me *too ſoon*, and ſhouldſt too ſoon cure me of my Diſeaſe of Incontinency, which I deſire rather to have ſatisfied than extinguiſhed. Thus many take up the words of *David*, (as it is too ordinary for men to make uſe of expreſſions borrowed from Scripture to fill up their prayers, without that ſpirit wherewith they were there ſpoken) *Set a Watch, O Lord, before my Mouth; keep the door of my Lips:* When they would be loth to be taken at their words, and *Pſ.* 141. 3.

be kept from ſpeaking many things, which God would keep them from ſhould he ſet a watch before them. Again, many pray that God would not lead them into temptation, when they would be loth to be kept from many things which are a temptation to them.

The *ſecond* caſe wherein this happens is, when we pray for ſuch things as we would indeed have done, but yet would not have it done by ſuch means as God uſually makes uſe of for the effecting

fecting of ſuch things: As when we pray that God would humble our proud Hearts, we could be content to have it done as *Naaman* would have had his Leproſy cured, by ſome miraculous means which may put us to no trouble; but would not have it done by any humbling Providence. We would have our Hearts weaned from the World, but not by *hedging up our way with Thornes*, or croſſing or diſappointing us in our worldly Deſigns. We pray with

2 *King.* 5. 11.

Hoſ. 2. 6.

Pſal. 139. 23. *David* that God would *ſearch us and try us*, but would not have it done by any ſearching Affliction, or trying Providence. This indeed is not ſo groſs Hypocriſy as the former; yet he that doth ſincerely will the End, doth alſo will the Means that are ordinarily neceſſary thereto: Elſe we deale with God as with a Phyſician whom we have ſent for to cure our diſeaſe, but when he comes, begin to propoſe terms to him; that he ſhall not let us blood, nor

give

give us any thing that will make us ſick, nor confine us to our chamber or our bed, nor reſtrain us from any thing which we have a mind to. Who would bear with ſuch a Patient, or undertake his Cure on ſuch Terms? Now the Spirit helps this Infirmity by mortifying thoſe Luſts which are ſo loth to yeeld: To remedy which he doth, by making us Partakers of the Divine Nature, and renewing our Minds, and ſetling in our Hearts ſuch Princi-

Rom. 8. 13.

2 *Pet.* 1. 4.

Rom. 12. 2.

ples as are contrary to those prejudices which we have taken up against the Waies of God, by renewing our Wills sincerely to desire the things which we are convinced in our judgment that we ought to pray for; *he working in us both to will and to do of his Good Pleasure*; and by quickening our Affections to heavenly things, so as to make us *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, that is, sincerely and earnestly to desire it.

Phil. 2. 13.

Mat. 5. 6.

The fourth Infirmity

ty wherewith our Prayers are attended, is, the the Wandering of our Minds therein, or not carefully attending thereto; drawing nigh to God with our Lips, and honouring him with our Mouths, when our Hearts are far from him: Like the Fools Eys in the corners of the Earth. Now our Saviour tells us, this *is to worship God in vain*: And Jeremiah, *that we shall seek him and find him, when we search for him with all our Heart.* But that I may clear up

Matt. 15. 9.

Prov. 17. 24.

Jer. 29. 13.

up this matter so as not to leave any unnecessary Scruples in the Mind of any, I shall premise, *First*, that there is a Wandering or Trifling in Prayer, which is altogether voluntary; when men do not at all strive against it, nor make any Conscience of it: such Prayer is but Lip-Labour; or, כמוש פרים as the Rabbins call it, which God regards not. *Secondly*, there is a wandring of our minds in prayer, which is not properly voluntary, proceeding part-

partly from the Buſineſs of our Fancies, and the malicious Injections of the Devil. This the Spirit doth not free us from by any Aſſiſtance which we have from him: He doth not ſo ſubdue our ſpiritual Enemies, as wholly to diſcharge us from our ſpiritual Warfare; but to aſſiſt us, as we may be able to maintain our *conflict* with our Spiritual Adverſaries: So that though ſuch unſtedineſs of our Minds may be matter of Humiliation to us, we cannot hope that the Spirit

rit should so far help *us*, as wholly to free *us* from it. *Thirdly*; there is a Distraction or wandring in Prayer, proceeding from our own neglect: which, though we do not, as the first sort that I speak of, wholly give way to, but are convinced that it is sinful; yet we do not, as we ought, watch and strive against it. This is that which many of the Ancients complain of, whose *words* I shall take liberty to transcribe, that we may see if we are troubled with such *wandrings*, our case

caſe is not ſingular: yet, what a ſence good men have had of this infirmity, hear how *Auſtin* complains, in *Pſalmum* 85, *Ipſæ plerunque orationes impediuntur vanis cogitationibus, ita ut vix ſtet cor ad Deum ſuum, & vult ſe tenere ut ſtet & quodammodo fugit a ſe, nec inveniet cancellos quibus ſe includat, aut obices quoſdam quibus retineat avolationes ſuas & vagos quoſdam motus, &c.* Our Prayers are diſtracted with *vain* thoughts, ſo that our hearts cannot keep cloſe to God, or

ſtand

ſtand ſtill with him; it doth, as it were, flee from it ſelf, and there are no bounds to be ſet to the extravagant motions of it: and he ſhould have thought his own caſe ſingular if he had not found *David* ſaying in a certaine place, *Thy ſervant hath found his heart to pray to thee*; For ſo he reads that place, *Quoniam inveni Domine cor meum ut orarem ad te*: Whereon he obſerves, that *David* ſaith, that *he found his heart*, as though his heart were wont to flee away from him,

2 Sam. 7. 27.

him, and he forced to run after this fugitive, and not being able to overtake it himself, to cry to the Lord, *My heart hath left me.* So *Cyprian in Orat. Dominic.* Having made many complaints on like occasions, adds, *Quomodo te audiri à Deo postulas, cum te ipse non audias? Vis esse Deum memorem tui cum rogas, cum tu ipse memor tui non sis?* We would have God to mind and hearken to our Prayers, when we do not regard them our selves. So *Jerom* complains how he was frequently in his

Pray-

Prayers walking in the Galleries, or casting up his Accounts, or drawn away by some filthy thoughts; and addes, *Do we think Jonah prayed thus? Or the three Children? or Daniel among the Lyons? Or the Thiefe upon the Crosse?* So *Salvian* also; *Aliud quippe ora hominum, aliud Corda agunt: Et dum verbis præterita malu plangunt, sensu futura meditantur.* Men do one thing with their Mouths, another thing with their Hearts; with the one they bewaile their sins

 past,

paſt, with the other ſtudy how they may ſin for the future. See more of like Nature in *Bernard de interiori Domo Cap.* 29. 33. *And Bellarmine* himſelf, however he may write in heat of Controverſie about free-wil and the Grace of God, yet in that Book which he ſaies himſelf he had read three or four times, and purpoſed to exerciſe himſelf frequently in the reading of, having found it ſo uſeful to him (whereas he read his other Books only when he was forced thereto) I mean his

his Book *de Ascensione mentis in Deum*, complains that he could not do the good which he would, but did the evil which he would not; and particularly when he would set himself to Prayer, his Mind wandered from him, and drew him to other things, and before he was aware his Prayer was interrupted and he was deceived by his Imagination; and a little after he adds, *Quare Anima mea si sapis noli de viribus liberi arbitrii gloriari donec pervenias ad libertatem*

libertatem gloriæ filiorum Dei: that is, *Wherefore, O my ſoul, if thou be wiſe, do not boaſt of the Power of Freewill till thou come to the glorious* Liberty *of the Sons of God.* Grad. 8. pag. 176, 177. and Grad. 16. pag. 321. ſpeaking of thoſe words of the Apoſtle, *in many things we offend all*, he adds, *What muſt we ſay that fall ſo far ſhort of the perfection of the Apoſtles? We pray to God, and preſently our Imaginations carry us away to think of other things; and we turn the back as it were on God.* Now thus Jam. 3. 2.

thus to trifle with God in Prayer is very unſuitable to the Majeſty and Greatneſs of that God whom we ſhould ſerve with Reverence and godly Fear; very unbecoming thoſe that have or ſhould have ſuch a ſenſe of the Worth of thoſe things we pray for, and the need which we ſtand in of them; and ſuch Prayers are no way anſwerable to thoſe expreſſions of Scripture, whereby the Nature of Prayer is ſet forth; *as wreſtling with God*; *ſtriving with*

Heb. 12. 28.

Gen. 32. 24.

with him; pouring out a Prayer to him; pouring out our heart before him; crying to him; ſearching for him with all our heart; ſtirring up our ſelves to take hold on him; lifting up our Soul to him: So that we loſe much of the Comfort and Benefit of our Prayers, and finding little Sweetneſs therein and rare returns thereto, another evil followes hereupon, and that is Tedioufneſs or Wearineſs of Spirit therein. It is with us, as with Servants that goe with their Maſters when

Rom. 15. 30. *Eſa.* 26. 16. *Pſal.* 102. 1. *Pſal.* 62. 8. *Jona.* 2. 2. *Jer.* 29. 13. *Eſa.* 64. 7.

when they visit their Friends: The Master who is taken into some inner Room, and hath the delightful Converse of his Friend, and some Collation or Banquet to entertain him, thinks time hastens too fast away; while the Servant that stayes without, and hath no Company to converse with, nor any thing to refresh him, thinks time long and tedious. Or, it is with men in Duties of Religion, as in reading Books: A School-boy to perform his task toyls a-

about words, without regard to the Matter thereby expreſſed, and burdens his Memory with what he underſtands not: But when he comes to be a man, and capable of Underſtanding the Matter of the Book, and to ſuck out the Marrow and Sweetneſs of it; what was a burden to him before, is now a Delight. So, while we are Chriſtians only by Profeſſion, we tire our ſelves with the meer out-ſide or ſhell of Duties; But when we come to be Chriſti-

Christians in truth, we come to the marrow and kirnel thereof, and so they are sweet and delightful to us. Now the Spirit helps the distraction and wandring of our minds, and consequently the tediousness and wearineſs that followes thereupon, by *making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*; inspiring us with those earnest and fervent *desires* which our tongues (that ordinarily out-run our desires) are not able to express. And it is the first direction that a learned

learned Man, in his exerciſes of holy living, gives againſt Wandring Thoughts in Prayer, that, beſides the moral Induſtry that we ſhould add, to be ſteady in our Thoughts, we ſhould pray for the Spirit of Supplication, and uſe Prayer to be aſſiſted in Prayer: And as God can unite our Hearts to fear his Name, ſo he can unite them, or keep them cloſe unto himſelf in Prayer. For, not to inſiſt upon that immediate or Phyſical Influx that he may have

Pſ. 86. 11.

upon our Minds to determine them to any particular Object, we may conceive how this may be done in a moral way, as a Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation assisting our Understandings in the knowledge of Spiritual things, that having a due Sense of the Majesty and Greatness of God with whom we have to do, and the Necessity and Excellency of the things we pray for, our Minds may be more intent and fixed on the Object and Matter of our Prayrs: as the lame man gave

Acts. 3. 5.

gave heed to *Peter* and *John*, expecting *to receive* ſomething from them.

Further, the Spirit of God doth both encourage our moral Induſtry, and likewiſe aſſiſt us therein. And as I before explained the *Greek* Word, here uſed in the Text, *helps* or *takes over againſt us*, by giving us ſome ſweet taſts of Spiritual Comforts in Prayer. As the learned man laſt mentioned, obſerves in the beginning of Religion moſt frequently, and at other times irregularly, God complies

with our Infirmities, and encourages our Duty, with little overflowings of ſpiritual Joy, and ſenſible Pleaſure and Delicacies and Prayer, ſo as we ſeem to feel ſome little beam of Heaven, and great refreſhments from the Spirit of conſolation; though he addes, that it is not ſafe for us always to expect them, for when we do ſo, it is apt to make us cool in our enquiries and waitings upon Chriſt when we want them. This ſeems to be that which the Church means by being

ing *brought into the chambers of her beloved*, which are places of moſt intimate and familiar converſe; and *into the Banquetting-houſe*, or *Wine-cellar*, to taſte thoſe ſpiritual Comforts which are as the beſt Wine, that cauſeth the Lips of thoſe that are aſleep to ſpeak; and though we taſt not theſe Comforts alwayes in Prayer, nor frequently; though this be, as *Bernard* ſaith, *rara Hora*, a time that ſeldom happens; yet, as *David's* Soul longed to ſee Gods Power and Glo-

Cant. 1. 4.

Cant. 2. 4.

Cant. 7. 9.

Pſal. 63. 1. 2.

ry as he had ſeen it in his Sanctuary; ſo this will make us long and hope to taſte the like refreſhments in prayer: as a good man when he had loſt a Son, and was very much *afflicted* thereby, he was obſerved on a ſudden to be very chearful; and being asked what was the reaſon of ſo ſudden a change? he anſwered, that to enjoy thoſe *comforts* which he had found with God in prayer, he could be content to loſe a Son every day in the year.

The *Fifth* and laſt infirmity

firmity which I ſhall ſpeak of, is *Sorrow* or *Grief*, which many times makes the ſoul as a Veſſel without vent. *Cura levis loquuntur, ingentis ſtupent*; light afflictions do many times makes us pour out our prayers to God, but great afflictions amaze and ſtupifie. So the *Pſalmiſt* was ſo troubled, that he could not ſpeak. Yet this is an infirmity; for we ſhould pour out our complaint before the Lord even when we are overwhelmed. Now, according as this ſorrow

Eſa. 26. 16.

Pſal. 77. 4.

Pſa. 102. 1.

or trouble is different, ſo is the means whereby the Spirit doth help or eaſe us. Sometimes our affliction may be very great, and we may be preſſed out of meaſure above ſtrength, as *Paul* was in *Aſia*; and then God pities us, as a Father pities his Children: and, as when the Spirits are exceedingly oppreſſed, we apply Cordials which may relieve them, and enable the ſick perſon to breath; ſo God doth by his Spirit ſhed abroad his love into our hearts, which doth relieve

2 *Cor.* 1. 8.

Pſal. 103. 13.

leive and revive the Soul by a more immediate virtue, then thoſe comforts, which by degrees we relieve our ſelves with, by communing with our own hearts, or meditating on the Scriptures: as Cordials do not require time or natural ſtrength to concoct them, and turn them to Nouriſhment, as meat doth; but immediately diffuſeth its virtue to the ſudden cheering or revival of the Patient. Sometimes Chriſtians are (as I may ſay) ſullen; like *Ahab* when he *Rom.* 5. 5.

could not have *Naboth's*
1 *Kin.* 21 4 Vinyard, being exceedingly discontented at some worldly cross or disappointment; as *Jo-*
Jon. 4. 1, 8. *nah* at the withering of his Gourd, and at Gods sparing of *Ninive*; or they do too much give way to grief, and indulge themselves therein; as
Psal. 77 2. the Psalmist refused to be comforted. Now the way to deal with such, is to awaken their *Consciences* to a due sense of the evil of sin, that they may more earnestly pray for the pardon of it, or more prize the pardon of

it;

it; and think with themſelves they have greatter matters to exerciſe their minds, then thoſe that they trouble themſelves ſo much with; or that God hath done ſo much for them in the pardon of their ſins, that they ſhould not take outward troubles ſo grievouſly at the hands of God, but be content to receive ſome evil from him, having received ſo much good: as when *David* was ſo exceedingly troubled at the death of *Abſalom*, *Joab* rouſed him out of his dumps.

Job 2. 10.

2 *Sam.* 19. 5.

dumps, by repreſenting to him his unkindneſs to his faithful Subjects, and how this act of his might be juſtly interpreted; and likewiſe the great danger which might enſue thereon, by his people leaving him while he did ſo diſcourage them: and this made him ſhake himſelf from his ſorrow.

I ſhall in a few words apply what I have ſaid on this Subject; and this may,

Firſt, inſtruct us how exceeding impotent we are to that which is good;

good; there is nothing doth more fully convince us of our weakneſs, then our inability to pray. We might think, if we conſidered things only in the *Idea*, as they ſpeak, without conſulting experience, that if we could do any thing we might pray; it being that which our neceſſity doth ſo far enforce us to, that it might ſeem enough to us to have liberty to pray: but we ſee, that as we cannot call Chriſt Lord without the Spirit; ſo we cannot call God Father with-

without the assistance thereof; nor pray either for matter or manner, as we ought, without it. Wherefore it seems strange to me that any wise considering man should reduce the whole interest of the Spirit in the Prayers of Christians, to that extraordinary gift in the primitive times, whereby, as they say, those that were to pray for others, were enabled to ask those things which were useful for them, and to teach others how to form their prayes; and so, that to

pray

pray in the holy Ghoſt, Jude 20.
enjoyned by the Apoſtle, was to keep to the publick Aſſembly, and joyn with him that was then aſſiſted in his Prayers by the holy Ghoſt. And that this gift when it ceaſed, was ſupplied by ſet prepared forms for daily and conſtant uſes, provided by ſuch as had benefited under thoſe that had ſuch gifts, and remembred ſome of their Forms, or at leaſt the method and manner uſed by them; and that Liturgies in the Church had their riſe from hence

hence. About the uſe of Liturgies in the Primitive Church, or the authority of thoſe recommended to us for their venerable antiquity, it is not for me now to ſpeak any thing, but by what I have already ſaid, it appears, that the Spirit of God is further concerned in the Prayers of Chriſtians, and I cannot ſee how the Spirit ſhould this way make interceſſion for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered.

Secondly; This may teach

teach us when ever we go to God by Prayer, *Eph.* 2. 18. not only to come to him by Jeſus Chriſt for acceptance, but to look to the Spirit for his aſſiſtance. We do not expect, nor teach others to expect *Enthuſiaſmes*, or immediate Inſpirations ordinarily in Prayer, neither do we ſuppoſe that men ſhould attend ſo for the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, as to forbear their Prayers till they find themſelves (like holy men of old who were the pen-men of the Scripture) moved by the holy Ghoſt,

Ghoſt, much leſs do we think that all *Extempore Prayer*, as it is called, or *conceived Prayer*, is by the holy Ghoſt; neither do we ſuppoſe that thoſe that joyn with others in Prayer do not pray by the holy-Ghoſt; for he aſſiſts, as to the manner, as well as the matter of our Prayers; neither do we believe that the Spirit aſſiſts us to the utmoſt of his power, ſo that thoſe Prayers wherein we have his aſſiſtance ſhould be in every reſpect perfect: but he doth, as a Spirit of Grace

and

and Supplication, not only qualifie us habitually for Prayer, but assist us actually in Prayer, yet in such measure as seems good to him: and as of old God would not accept of Sacrifices offered by strange fire, so neither will he accept of our Spiritual Sacrifices, unless they be offered by the fire of Zeal, kindled from Heaven, and blown up by the holy Ghost: but as he may hear Sinners, as he did *Ahab*, for some outward Mercies, which are from the exuperance or over-

Zach. 12. 10.

Lev. 10. 1.

1 *King.* 21. 29.

overflowings of his bounty. And though I doubt not but many do vainly pretend to, or falsely boast of the assistance of the Spirit in Prayer, not understanding what they speak, or whereof they affirm; yet to scoff at praying by the Spirit, as if it were not a thing for any to expect, or in any sense to pretend to, is such a piece of boldness and prophaness, and at least borders so near upon Blasphemy, that no sober serious Christian will adventure upon it.

FINIS.

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